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Clarion Review ★★★☆☆ HUMOR FICTION

Laughter Is the Best Medicine: Medical Epigrams of J.H. Goldfuss

Joseph Haynor Goldfuss
Xlibris (Nov 12, 2011)
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“Architects cover their mistakes with vines; doctors with soil.” This is just one of the many pithy jokes that appear in the book *Laughter Is the Best Medicine: Medical Epigrams of J.H. Goldfuss*. Packaged in a canary-yellow cover with a mock-serious font, the volume’s appearance symbolizes the sarcastic humor within.

Joseph Haynor Goldfuss clearly does not like doctors. This is conveyed within the first few epigrams of the text, such as, “Horror movies were first filmed in the same year AMA was founded,” and “Those who love their doctors are called ‘wives.’” Legally blind and suffering from various medical disorders, Goldfuss was inspired to write these punchy little sayings as a way to channel his frustration with the medical profession. The result is a short book that cracks some very good jokes at doctors’ expense.

Reading a volume that consists solely of epigrams is an interesting experience. Because each epigram packs an intellectual punch—requiring a few seconds for the brain to untangle—the book is best read a few sentences at a time. Trying to read several at once can become rather arduous. There is also no narrative structure, so one need not read in a linear fashion. The most enjoyable way to read it is to simply pick it up and flip to an epigram.

Laughter Is the Best Medicine is not for those who are easily offended or who don’t like mordant humor. Most of the epigrams are about how doctors kill and profit from the poor health of their patients. Many are dark or downright lewd. For example, Golfuss writes, “Last time I had the doctor’s finger up my rectum, I asked why both his hands were on my shoulders.” In addition to carping about the medical establishment as a whole, Goldfuss calls out psychiatrists, gynecologists, prescription medication, the benefits of drinking, and more. While some epigrams are a little too simplistic (for instance, “Psychiatrists all see other psychiatrists”), most display Goldfuss’s whip-sharp sense of humor.

The main concern for this book is that it may be too specific to appeal to a wide audience. However, it is recommended for those who like epigrams and who have dark senses of humor. Anyone who has had some experience with the medical profession will appreciate the comic relief provided within.

LIA SKALKOS (November 14, 2012)

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